DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 167 TM 033 277

AUTHOR Lines, Patricia M.
TITLE Homeschoolers: Estimating Numbers and Growth.
INSTITUTION National Inst. on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment (ED/OERI), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 21p.; Web edition previously released in 1999.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/SAI/homeschool/homeschoolers.pdf.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; *Enrollment; *Home Schooling; Nontraditional Education; *Private Education

ABSTRACT

Data from state education agencies show that homeschooling has more than doubled, and possibly tripled, in the 5 years between the 1990-1991 school year and the 1995-1996 school year. By the 1995-1996 school year, from 1% to 2% of the total school-aged population were in homeschooling. Homeschooling has become a major sector of the private education world, representing approximately 10% of the privately schooled population. In some states, homeschooling may exceed 20% of the privately schooled population. The total number of homeschoolers in the 1990-1991 school year seemed to have been between 250,000 and 350,000 children nationwide, and around 700,000 to 750,000 in 1995-1996. Based on limited evidence from four states, the number is still growing. The rate was between 7% and 15% from the 1995-1996 school year to the 1996-1997 school year. If one assumes the larger growth rate, which is more consistent with past growth, the number could have reached about 1,000,000 children by the 1997-1998 school year. Growth has persisted over three decades. Earlier estimates, based on different methodologies, suggested 60,000 to 125,000 school-aged children in the fall of 1983, 122,000 to 244,000 for the fall of 1985, between 150,000 to 300,000 for the fall of 1988, and between 250,000 and 350,000 for fall 1990. A retroactive estimate done in 1988 suggested that 10,000 to 15,000 children received their education at home in the later 1970s and early 1980s, close to an estimate made at that time by an early leader of the homeschooling movement, John Holt. One appendix contains a summary of data available from the states on homeschooling, and the other lists families who file homeschooling paperwork by state. (Author/SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 456 167

Homeschoolers: Estimating Numbers and Growth

National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment

Office of Educational Research and Improvement

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

TM033277

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Homeschoolers:
Estimating Numbers and Growth

by
Patricia M. Lines

National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

Web Edition, Spring 1999
(previously released as a paper in Spring 1998)

This paper is intended to promote the exchange of ideas among researchers and policymakers. The views expressed in it are part of ongoing research and analysis and do not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Education.

This technical paper provides an estimate of the number of children in homeschooling. For general background on homeschooling, the reader should consult the earlier working paper: P. Lines, "Homeschooling: An Overview for Education Policymakers," revised March 1997; a version of this paper will appear in *Private Education and Educational Choice*, edited by James G. Cibulka (Greenwood Press, forthcoming). A single copy of this paper may obtained by contacting Dorothy Yates at Dorothy_Yates@ed.gov or by phone at (202) 219–2079.

Acknowledgments

Many persons read earlier drafts of this paper and provided valuable advice. Hopefully, the author improved the paper on following their suggestions, but if she did not, the fault is hers, not theirs. They include Judith Anderson, Senior Research Associate, National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment at the U.S. Education Department (ED); Stephen P. Broughman, Statistician, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), ED; Michelle Doyle, Director, Office of Non-Public Education, ED; Patrick Farenga, *Publisher of Growing Without Schooling*; Jack Klenk, Special Advisor, Office of Non-Public Education; Chris Klicka, Executive Director, Home School Legal Defense Association; Brian D. Ray, President, National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI); Thomas D. Snyder, Senior Research Analyst, NCES, ED; Lisa Towne, Presidential Management Intern, Planning and Evaluation Service, ED; the many individuals in State Education Agencies (SEAs) who helped by examining the paper, particularly for insights into their states; and the homeschooling leaders in various states who were willing to provide insights into the practices in their states. They are too many to mention, but the debt is greatest to these last two groups.

Homeschoolers:
Estimating Numbers and Growth

Overview

Homeschooling is the education of school-aged children under their parents' general monitoring, and it replaces full-time attendance at a campus school. Some homeschooling children enroll part time at a campus-based school, or share instruction with other families, but most of their educational program is under the direct oversight of parents. While many activities take place in the home, parents often draw on their community, neighboring institutions, and travel opportunities to complete the program. The definition used for this paper includes families who self-identify as homeschoolers, even if they utilize part-time school enrollment.

Homeschooling has more than doubled—possibly tripled—in the 5 years between the 1990–91 school year and the 1995–96 school year. By the 1995–96 school year, from 1 to 2 percent of the total school-aged population were in homeschooling. Within the private education world, it has become a major sector, where it represents approximately 10 percent of the privately-schooled population. In some states homeschooling may exceed 20 percent of the privately-schooled population.[1]

Given the evidence provided here, the total number of homeschoolers in the 1990–91 school year seems to have been between 250,000 to 350,000 children nationwide; and around 700,000 to 750,000 in 1995–96. Based on limited evidence from four states, the number is still growing; the rate was between 7 and 15 percent from the 1995–96 school year to the 1996–97 school year.[2] Assuming the larger growth rate, which is more consistent with past growth,[3] the number could have reached about 1,000,000 children by the 1997–98 school year.

Growth has persisted over three decades. Earlier estimates, based on different methodologies, suggested 60,000 to 125,000 school-aged children for the fall of 1983; and 122,000 to 244,000 for fall of 1985; between 150,000 to 300,000 for fall of 1988; and between 250,000 to 350,000 for fall of 1990. A retroactive estimate done in 1988 suggested 10,000 to 15,000 children received their education at home in the late 1970s and early 1980s, close to an estimate made at the time by an early leader of the homeschooling movement, educator and author, John Holt.

---

[1] This seems likely in the western states, where the private school population usually is less than the national average and homeschooling is relatively popular.

[2] Nebraska, South Carolina, Wyoming, and Pennsylvania sent the author their most recent data as it became available. Growth in Pennsylvania and South Carolina increased about 15 percent from one year to the next. It was closer to 7 percent in Nebraska and Wyoming. The data are provided in appendix A, third column.

[3] The growth rate from the 1990–91 to the 1995–96 school years appears to be between 20 and 25 percent per year.

The Raw Data

The data collected by State Education Agencies (SEAs) show a steadily growing homeschooling movement. Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia have released data on documented children in homeschooling for both years examined in this study. These data account for over 76,000 documented children in 1990–91 and almost 214,000 in 1995–96. This represents a fraction of the total, as it includes only children in families that have filed papers indicating that they are in homeschooling. Many families do not file papers, although it is required. Nor does the documented number include children enrolled in distance learning programs unless their parents have also filed papers with state or local officials indicating that theirs is a homeschooling program. Appendix A presents these data for each state.

States usually collect these data from local districts, although some collect it directly. Often the local education agency (LEA) collects the data in late fall or early winter and forwards it to the SEA by spring. Some states continuously monitor the number, and adjust it when families return to school, and publish only the year-end number. There is neither uniformity among states in procedures, nor in the dates for collection.[4]

States With Near Universal Filing

Based on discussions with state officials and homeschooling leaders familiar with the state, and on a nationwide survey (discussed more fully below), it is possible to identify three states where both homeschoolers and the SEA believe that filing rates approached 100 percent by 1995–96: Maine, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. In 1995–96, the total number of documented homeschooling children in the three states was 24,369 or 1.52 percent of the school-aged population in these states. The distribution within each of these states was approximately the same percentage.

Even here, the official filings make for a conservative statement of the number of homeschoolers in these states. There will be a small number of homeschoolers in these states who do not file papers, but we have no basis for estimating their numbers. In Maine, in particular, some homeschooling families operate as unapproved private schools and do not file papers with the state or local government.[5] If these states represent the country as a whole, there would be over 250,000 children in homeschooling, nationwide, in 1990–91; and almost 750,000 by 1995–96.

Other States: Estimating Non-filers

Except in states with near 100 percent filing, the state's documented data do not account for all homeschooled children. Many families do not file any paperwork with state or local officials because their homeschooling child is not old enough to come under the state's compulsory education law, and the state's law does not require filing. Some families are homeschooling under a state constitutional or statutory provision that excuses religious-based homeschoolers from filing requirements. In other states, some families may choose to follow the state's laws for private schools, and in a few of these states, these family-based schools do not file paperwork. In addition, the state data may be missing reports from some districts or be missing late-

---

[4] One reader of an early draft of this paper suggested the state number is inflated because students drop out of homeschooling and go back to school during the year. This may be true, but it seems that, given the growth curve for homeschooling, it is more likely that others will begin homeschooling after the count has been made for the year.

[5] Interview with Edwin N. Kastuck, Maine Department of Education, May 14, 1998.

filed data.

It is possible to estimate the non-filers, based on a survey by Brian Ray, of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI). In 1990 and 1995 Ray surveyed a sample of the membership of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), which had commissioned the survey. In both survey years about 63 percent[6] of respondents nationwide reported that they had filed "any kind of" paperwork with the state or local district.

As filing rates vary considerably from state to state, and depend on the state legal and policy environment, it is necessary to consider each state separately. Appendix B provides an estimated percentage of filers by state, based on the survey, and used with appendix A, provides the basis for the calculations given here. These appendices allow those knowledgeable about their state to make individual state-level estimates. Those using appendix B to estimate the number for a single state must have a good sense of whether the survey results for non-filers represents all homeschoolers in the state.

For most states it is necessary to estimate non-filers to get an accurate picture of homeschooling numbers. For a national estimate, one can minimize bias due to the survey by using data only from states with high filing rates. There are 14 states where 80 percent or more of the parents responding to the 1995 Ray survey said that they filed some kind of paperwork: Arkansas, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.[7]

The analysis of this group must omit two states where the state-level data is incomplete: Pennsylvania and New York. In Pennsylvania, most children under age 8 are missing from the state data reports.[8] As the age of compulsory education in that state does not begin until age 8, parents may file papers on older children (and are treated as filers based on the survey), but would not provide information on their children under age 8.[9] In New York state, the SEA believes it is missing data on documented children for New York City for 1995–96; it received no data at all from New York City in 1990–91.[10]

---

[6]These are weighted averages computed by dividing the documented number of homeschoolers by the total estimated homeschooling population. The estimated total is the documented number divided by the filing rate. The filing rates were taken from a data run provided by Brian Ray for the instant analysis; they are the percentage who responded "yes" to a question about filing paperwork. The question in both years was: "Have you submitted any type of paperwork to State or Local authorities?" See Ray, 1997, p. 108, Q. 2. In the 1995 survey, respondents were asked to answer for the 1994–95 school year. Given the near constant weighted average for filing rates in 1990 and 1995, it should not introduce much error when the instant study applies the filing rates for the 1994–95 school year to the 1995–96 data. Note the unweighted filing rate average is lower, reflecting a larger number of respondents from states with lower filing rates. This may be because those states have a less favorable legal climate, and respondents, mostly members of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), are more likely to come from these states.

[7]Only states with 12 or more respondents on the survey are included.

[8]The state data show for 1995–96, 104 children age 5; 339 at age 6; 981 at age 7; and 1,768 at age 8 in homeschooling. The jump from 7 to 8 suggests that most parents are not providing information on their children below age 8.

[9]E-mail correspondence with Susan Richman, a Pennsylvania homeschooling leader, April 16, 1998.

[10]For 1990–91, interview with Rachel Smith, Program Manager for Home Instruction, New York State Education Department, c. 1991. Officials believe that the reports for 1995–96 are too low, indicating that the 32 community school districts in New York City are not fully informed on their responsibilities for nonpublic education, and are overwhelmed by the needs of the children in public schools. Thomas E. Hogan, Supervisor, Nonpublic School Services, New York State Education Department, interview, June 15, 1998. Homeschooling leaders believe that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in New York City do not uniformly forward the data to the SEA. E-Mail correspondence with Seth Rockmuller, director, AllPIE, April 17, 1998. (AllPIE is an association supporting parental involvement in schooling, including homeschooling.)

The remaining 12 states accounted for 88,581 documented children in 1995–96. These documented homeschoolers are 1.2 percent of the total school-aged population in these states. The weighted filing rate in the Ray survey indicates 87.7 percent of homeschoolers filed papers in these states in 1995–96. If the survey is an accurate indicator of the percentage of filers, we can estimate about 101,000 homeschooling children, or 1.4 percent of the total school-aged population in these states. This would be consistent with a national homeschooling population of around 691,000 children. The calculations used to arrive at this conclusion appear in appendix C, and illustrate the method for calculating all subsequent estimates of homeschooling numbers. For both 1990–91[11] and 1995–96, the percentage estimated for these states is slightly lower, but close to the percentage computed for the three states where the filing rate was assumed to be 100 percent.

The range of estimated percentages of homeschoolers in these states varies. The most popular homeschooling states in this group appear to be South Dakota and Montana, where an estimated 2.1 percent of the population were in homeschooling in 1995–96. Arkansas, Georgia, Maryland, and North Carolina have the smallest estimated percentage of homeschoolers, at 1.3 percent. Minnesota had 1.4 percent; Maine, Nebraska and Wisconsin had 1.5 percent; and New Hampshire and Wyoming both had an estimated 1.6 percent of the population in homeschooling.

A third estimate uses all 19 states that in 1990 met the criterion that there be at least 12 respondents to the Ray survey for that state.[12] In this estimate, potential bias due to selection of states decreases, while bias in the estimate of non-filers based on the survey increases. Of the total in the 19 states, an estimated .42 percent were in homeschooling in 1990–91. For all 28 states that in 1995–96 met the criterion, an estimated 1.26 percent were in homeschooling. If typical of all states, this suggests about 211,000 homeschooling children nationally for 1990–91; and about 611,000 in 1995–96. However, these estimates include New York and Pennsylvania, which are missing children for whom parents filed papers. If we exclude these two states, the remaining 17 states had an estimated 106,350 children in homeschooling, or 1.43 percent of the school-aged population in 1995–96. This is consistent with 701,000 children in homeschooling nationwide in that year.

Rockmuller finds the data, showing 275 homeschoolers from New York City, "ridiculous." Hogan agrees that the number is much too low.

[11]There were about 33,751 children for which these same 12 states had data in 1990–91. Ignoring for the moment the lower response rate on the survey for 1990–91, estimating non–filers brings the total to an estimated 43,805 children homeschooling in these states, or .67 percent of the total in that year.

[12]See appendix B for the number of respondents for each state.

Possible Under-estimation of Non-filers, Based on Survey

As noted, the accuracy of the estimated number of non-filers depends on the representativeness of the Ray survey.[13] In 1990, Ray drew a random sample from the membership of HSLDA. In 1995, he repeated this step, and to broaden the base of his survey, he sent questionnaires to other homeschooling organizations with a request that the organization distribute the surveys to a sample of membership, following the enclosed instructions for drawing the sample. The response rate in 1990 was good—at approximately 70 percent. In 1995, he could not find out how many questionnaires were mailed by cooperating organizations, or even the number of cooperating organizations. As a result, he could not compute a response rate. He believes the response rate was around 30 percent.[14] It seems likely that the reduction in response rate was due to a large nonresponse from the organizations outside the HSLDA network, and that his survey continues to reflect HSLDA membership or those sympathetic to the HSLDA principles.

It is hazardous to generalize to an unknown population, based on a sample from only a portion of that population. At least, one must understand the origins and limitations of the sample, and proceed with caution. HSLDA supports Christian homeschooling, and members pay an annual fee of $100 for prepaid legal services for assistance in the event that they face problems with their homeschooling program. HSLDA does not accept members who utlize public school programs for homeschoolers. This sets its members apart from other homeschoolers in both predictable and unpredictable ways.

An important source of underestimation lies in the structure of the survey itself. While it elicits separate data for each homeschooled child, there is only one question about filing papers with state or local officials. In some families, parents may file papers for one child, and so answer "yes," but for children above or below the age of compulsory education, the answer would have been "no," had there been a question for each child. Again, the Ray survey will overstate filing rates as a result. In a state such as Pennsylvania, where the state has data on only a handful of children under the age of 8, this can produce a large underestimate of the actual number of children in homeschooling.

Another issue involves whether nonresponders on any survey will differ from responders in their compliance with state laws requiring filing of paperwork. It seems reasonable that nonresponders may be less organized, less punctual, or more cautious about revealing their homeschooling status. Thus, it seems likely that families that respond to a survey include a disproportionately high number that would respond to filing requirements.

Another difference might arise if HSLDA members have different filing rates than other homeschoolers. In some states, such as New York, where large numbers of families who homeschool for philosophical reasons, and who, also for philosophical reasons reject standardized testing, the HSLDA members may not be representative, and actual filing rates will be lower than assumed for purposes of this paper.

All things considered, it seems likely that the estimate of non-filers is low. For that reason, this paper

---

[13]The author is very grateful to Brian Ray and the HSLDA for continuing to conduct and make available this valuable research. It remains the only source on which to estimate filing rates nationwide.

[14]He mailed 5,995 copies of the instrument to individual families and to organizations in early 1996. He received 249 returned but uncompleted surveys, presumably from families that were not homeschooling, and 1,657 completed surveys. He assumes that some of the organizations did not redistribute the surveys. Ray, *Strengths of Their Own* (Salem, Oregon: NHERI Publications, 1997), p. 20.

relies on the survey in limited ways. It is used only to help identify states with high filing rates; and to estimate non-filers only in such states. By limiting the use of the survey in this way, a relatively small percentage of the total is based on an estimate of non-filers. The examination of the three states believed to have near 100 percent filing rates does not rely on the survey at all, and is probably a better indicator of the experience nationwide than the subsequent two estimates.

Testing the Estimates

Loose corroboration of the estimates can be made in a variety of ways. For example, one could test the evidence by attempting to predict the homeschooling population in a state, based on the estimates, and compare this with what is known about the state. California is a special case, because of its size. California was not included in the estimates provided above because the legal context is ambiguous, and the interpretation of the Ray survey is hazardous, given the special circumstances of California.[15] Instead, incidence of homeschooling in California, for purpose of the national estimate above, is inferred from the average in other states.

This inference can be tested. In California, with almost 6 million school-aged children, one would expect 90,000 children in homeschooling, if the 1.5 percent average is an accurate predictor. If one tallies up the known number of children in homeschooling in California, one can account for almost 62,000 children.[16] This includes children in private schools with less than five children—generally assumed to be homeschools. HSLDA in fact encourages its members to file as private schools in California. It also includes children enrolled in independent study in a public program.[17] The SEA regards this as something other than homeschooling, while the families and the local public schools appear to regard it as homeschooling with curricular assistance from a public school teacher.[18] Finally, it includes children enrolled in public school home study programs. As the SEA regards this last option as the only legal option for homeschooling under state law,[19] many California homeschoolers may prefer to remain underground. If just one-third or more are underground, then the estimates based on experience in states with good filing rates does help predict, but only loosely, the incidence in California.[20]

---

[15]For philosophical reasons, HSLDA does not admit members who utilize public programs. Most of the data from California represent children in public programs, and so the HSLDA survey is of no help in interpreting this data.

[16]See appendix A, column 3.

[17]These would not include HSLDA families, as the organization, for philosophical reasons, does not admit families that enroll in public homeschooling programs.

[18]Promotional materials from the public schools that offer independent study often refer to it as "homeschooling," and a number of the local officials running these programs have indicated that their parents would self-identify as homeschoolers. A teacher at the school provides curricular supervision, while the parent has day-to-day responsibility for oversight of activities (e.g., e-mail from Tom Cosgrove, CEO of Cato Charter School in Victorville, Dec. 13, 1997; and e-mail from Sheree Dennee, principal of Orange County Department of Education Home Education Program (CHEP), Dec. 16, 1997). For purposes of this technical paper, all three methods seem to meet the definition of homeschooling.

[19]E-mail correspondence with Lynn P. Hartzler, Ph.D., Consultant, Alternative Education and Independent Study, California Department of Education, December 8, 1997.

[20]In fact, I suspect that the incidence of homeschooling in California resembles the incidence in Oregon and Washington, at 2 percent or more of the total school-aged population. This would mean about half of California homeschoolers have not filed any papers or enrolled in a public school independent study or homeschooling program. The HSLDA survey indicates 45 percent did not file any papers in 1995–96.

Other studies also help corroborate the estimate offered here. In 1990, I triangulated the approach and made three independent estimates. The high estimate was based on curricular sales, and the low estimate based on information from state homeschooling associations.[21] The estimate based on state data, with its middle position made it attractive as a single estimate. Since then, moreover, more states have been able to provide data.

In a separate study, Ray recently estimated numbers based on the sale of complete, graded curricular packages by four popular providers of such packages. Based on the percentage of survey respondents that said that they used such a package (4.88 percent),[22] he computed 1.2 million for 1996, but he also estimated that this contained a large margin of error.[23] Some of the difference will be due to growth from 1995–96 (the date for the estimate here) to 1996–97, the date for which Ray made his estimate. The remainder of the difference will be due to bias in the samples informing both our estimates. The bias in the estimate offered in this paper has been discussed above. For an estimate based on curricular packages, there is a possibility of severe upward bias if any of the four curriculum providers rounded the number upwards when providing data on their sales.[24] There could also be an upward bias if many families accelerate a child through more than one package a year. It is our mutual impression that the estimate presented here is low, and Ray's is high.[25]

An alternate way to assess the extent to which Americans have turned to homeschooling would be a household survey. The United States Census and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center on Education Statistics (NCES), have begun to include questions about homeschooling in household surveys. The 1994 Current Population Survey, for example, included a series of questions about homeschooling. Analysis of these data is expected in about a year.[26] When complete, the analysis will serve as a useful check on the analysis presented here.

Discussion

What to make of this growth? If one is considering the size of the constituency, one might note that the total number of individuals with some homeschooling experience will be much greater than the number

---

[21]Lines, *Estimating the Home Schooled Population*, Office of Research Working Paper, 91-537 (Washington DC: USED/OERI, October, 1991) (available from ERIC, ED337903; Clearinghouse No. EA023430); a version of this paper is reprinted as "Home Instruction: Characteristics, Size and Growth," *Home Schooling: Political, Historical and Pedagogical Perspectives*, edited by Jane VanGalen and Mary Anne Pitman, pp. 9-41 and appendix (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1991).

[22]This is the percentage who responded that they had purchased and used the curricular package in the 1994-95 year for an individual child. See Ray 1997, p. 110-11. This eliminates the possibility of an underestimate due to use of second hand curricular material.

[23]HSLDA, *Home Education Across the United States: Family Characteristics, Student Achievement, and Longitudinal Traits* (NHERI, 1997). See *http://www.hslda.org* for an abridged copy of this report.

[24]Because the percentage of families using packages is so low, chances of a large error in the estimate increase. For example, if it is only 2 percent off, it would yield almost a 50 percent difference in the estimate.

[25]Personal communication, November 12, 1997.

[26]As of late 1997, the Census Bureau had no plans to analyze or report on this data. Conversation with Wendy Bruno, (202) 547-2464, August 12, 1997. However, NCES has indicated interest in analyzing the data. Conversation with Stephen Broughman, February 28, 1998.

homeschooling in any single year. Some observers think that the turnover rate is about 2 years per child.[27] True, many families homeschool their children for their entire school-aged years, but many others try it for a shorter time. If the average turnover rate is 2 years, then the number of children with some homeschooling experience, by age 18, would be around 6 to 12 percent of the population.

The general size and direction of the homeschooling movement is beyond doubt. Policymakers needing more precise knowledge, such as planning for teacher hiring, should consult the estimates only with great care. Only those states with high filing rates can make accurate calculations based on their documented data. On the other hand, the estimates should help policy decisions that need a general, broad picture. For example, a district interested in starting a public school program for homeschoolers can be reassured that there is probably a constituency for the program in the district. As a second example, districts interested in including homeschoolers in planning can make some rough estimates of the number in their district.

[27] An informal study by Marie Della Bella, a long-time school approval consultant for the Connecticut Department of Education (retiring in 1997), indicated a duration of 2 years. On the other hand, parents responding to Ray's survey indicated that the average duration for homeschooling had been 5 years for a child, since age 5, with plans to continue (Ray 1997, p. xii). However, those who are in it for the long-term may be more likely both to become members of HSLDA and to respond to the survey.

Appendix A
State Education Agencies
Summary of Available Data on Homeschooling

State	Reported number of homeschooling children		Notes on data, additional information on the state and name of SEA contact
	1990–91	1995–96	
Alabama			LEAs have sole responsibility. Casandra Ramey, (334) 242–8165.
Alaska			The Alyeska Distance Learning program had about 1,000 enrolled in 1990–91 and 2,000 in 1995–96. Virgie L. Fryrear, Alyeska Central School, (907) 465–2835. Data are from Chris Yates, registrar.
Arizona			The state collects data from local education agencies (LEAs) when a family withdraws a child from a public school. Families who never enrolled would not be included. In 1995, Paul Street, (907) 465–2835, estimated 8,000 children homeschooling in Arizona.
Arkansas	2,500	5,755	LEAs report children in homeschooling to the state as of December for each school year. Yvette Billingham, (501) 682–4233.
California			One can estimate 6,000 children in 1990–91 and 13,849 in 1995–96 based only a count of students in private schools of 5 or fewer children (generally assumed to be homeschools). In 1995–96 there were 7,349 such private schools filing affidavits. (Data are from statistical reports.) A popular way to homeschool is to qualify as a private school, although the state does not regard this as homeschooling. Carolyn Pirillow, (916) 657–2453 (not contacted directly). Independent study, considered by many who do it as homeschooling, but not so by the state, accounted for 39,350 children in 1990–91 and 46,519 children in 1995–96, according to California's Web site. California enrolled home study (those who qualify because they have a certified tutor), accounted for 8,242 children in 1995–96; there were no data for 1990–91 for this category. California posts this data on its Web site.
Colorado			LEAs have sole responsibility. Don Watson, (303) 894-2155.
Connecticut	289	1,615	States collect reports from LEAs. The 1995–96 data is an average of data for the 1994–95 and the 1996–97 school years. Sheila Brown, (860) 566–8263.
Delaware	367	1,087	Families report to the SEA. Carole D. White, Education Specialist, Delaware SEA. Ron Meade, (302) 739–4676.
Dist. of Columbia	10	77	Families request and receive approval from the District education agency. Sharon Dunmore, (202) 724–4790.
Florida	7,555	16,623	Estimated based on number of families who self–report as homeschoolers. The estimate, based on a survey of these families at a 59 percent rate of return, assumes an average of 1.4 school aged children in homeschooling in each family. Mary Lou Carothers, (850) 414–1289.
Georgia	5,581	1,5356	Reports from LEAs. Amy C. McMurtrey, (404) 656–2446.
Hawaii	272	1,543	Families are required to inform schools about homeschooling whenever they change schools (elementary to secondary or geographic relocation).

State	Reported number of homeschooling children		Notes on data, additional information on the state and name of SEA contact
	1990–91	1995–96	
			Schools report this initial data to SEA. Those in their second and subsequent year and those who never inform the schools are not reported. Joanne Swearingen, (808) 733–9895. Data are from Karl Yoshida, (808) 832–5880.
Idaho			LEAs have sole responsibility. Ann Fox, (208) 332–6800. Robert M. Forrey provided the data for the 1995–96 estimate.
Illinois	529	1,200	Parents voluntarily report to the SEA. 1989-90 given. Connie J. Wise, (217) 785–7207.
Indiana	1,462	9,000	Families report to the SEA. Prior to 1996–97 the SEA recorded the number of active homeschooling sites, but did not record enrollment. The number for 1995–96 is reported children plus an estimate for families who filed papers but did not report the number of children who were homeschooling. There were 4,430 documented sites. The number for 1990–95 is for sites only. By 1997–98, efforts had been made to obtain the number of children, including an on–line registration option. The state has greatly increased the number of sites for which it has data on children, but it still has records for only 8,800 enrolled children in 9,244 active homeschooling schools. Gaylon J. Nettles, (317) 232–9132; and Lora Miller, (317) 232–9135.
Iowa			In 1995–96, Iowa counted 3,529 children in either the state's Dual Enrollment Program or the Home School Assisted Program. There are additional ways to legally conduct homeschooling in Iowa. Iowa did not have data for 1990–91. Jim Tyson, (515) 281–5001.

State	Reported number of homeschooling children		Notes on data, additional information on the state and name of SEA contact
	1990–91	1995–96	
Kansas	2,700	8,000	The data are estimated from the number of unaccredited schools reporting to the state as of February 1991 (1,350 schools) and fall 1995 (4,000 schools). An October 1997 survey indicated that of the 5,186 unaccredited schools surveyed, 73 were campus schools; another 2,223 were deemed inactive, as they did not return the survey (instructions indicated that no response meant the school was inactive). Of those who responded, 55 percent voluntarily provided the number of children in homeschooling: an average of two. Maria Collins, (913) 296–2198. As of the 1997–98 school year, Kansas counted 6,245 unaccredited schools, including the 73 campus schools.
Kentucky			LEAs have sole responsibility. In 1990–91, the Non-public School Advisor estimated between 1,500 and 5,000 homeschooled students in Kentucky. David X. Thurmond, (502) 564–4770.
Louisiana	2,121	6,271	Reports from LEAs. Parishes had reported the 1990–91 number as of Feb. 1991. The 1995–96 data was reported differently. 4,686 families filed as "home study" programs; Another 1,585 filed as homeschoolers. Dean Frost, (504) 342–3475.
Maine	1,566	3,400	Families report to the SEA. Edwin N. Kastuck, (207) 287–5922.
Maryland	2,296	9,529	LEA coordinators report numbers of students for whom a parent has requested homeschooling. Richard Scott, (410) 767 0288.
Massachusetts			LEAs have sole responsibility. Juliane Dow, (617) 338–3300.
Michigan	822	2,980	Families report to the SEA. In the 1996–97 school year, the number dropped to 2,361, and from preliminary reports for 1996–97, it will be lower still. In 1996 the Michigan legislature enacted an exemption to the compulsory education law that allows homeschooling without filing papers. Jean Shane, (517) 373–0796.
Minnesota	5,086	10,519	Families report to the SEA. Barry Sullivan, (612) 296–6595.
Mississippi	600	6,335	LEA officials relay the data to the state. The 1990–91 data are from 1989–90. Kevin Merry, (601) 359–3598.

State	Reported number of homeschooling children		Notes on data, additional information on the state and name of SEA contact
	1990–91	1995–96	
Missouri			LEAs have sole responsibility. The state uses data from homeschool associations. School Law and Legislation Section, (573) 751–7602.
Montana	1,446	3,159	Families report to county superintendents. The first column data are from 1989–90. Gail Gray, (406) 444–3095.
Nebraska	2,147	4,137	A homeschool is considered a private school. Families report their schools to the SEA. Data for 1995–96 include two categories combined: single–family and multi–family homeschooling and are analyzed in a study by Sue Roberts, (402) 471–2784. She also notes that the number of children in 1996-97 was 4,407, and for the 1997-98 school year was 4,573.
Nevada	792	3,077	The 1990–91 data are the number of homeschooling children taking achievement tests. This practice was discontinued in the 1995–96 school year. Holly Walton-Buchanan, (702) 687–9134.
New Hampshire	711	3,025	The 1990–91 number are those who filed with LEAs. The 1995–96 number represents notices of intent filed with the SEA, through the LEA. It represents children who homeschooled 1 or more days in 1995–96. Jacke Teague, (603) 271–3739.
New Jersey			New Jersey had a 1985 census indicating about 1,000 homeschooling children. Peter B. Contini, (609) 292–4442; John Lally, (609) 984–7814.
New Mexico			LEAs have responsibility. The SEA recently began to collect the information from the LEAs. As of December, 1995 it counted 5,337 K–12 children in homeschooling. Lorraine Sanchez, (505) 827–6582.
New York	4,975	11,473	The 1990–91 data do not include data from New York City (Rachel Smith, now retired). The 1995–96 data are from Thomas E. Hogan, (518) 474–3879. Note that a testing requirement in New York may disuade many homeschoolers not to file.
North Carolina	4,127	13,801	Data are based on enrollment reports filed with the state. In the 1996–97 school year, the number grew to 15,785. Rod Helder, (919) 733–4276.

State	Reported number of homeschooling children		Notes on data, additional information on the state and name of SEA contact
	1990–91	1995–96	
North Dakota	483	698	At the end of the year, LEAs file a report with the SEA. Its chief purpose is to determine how many homeschooled children enrolled part time in school, for purposes of state assistance. However, LEAs also report the number of children whose parents notified the LEA that they were homeschooling. Joan Estes, (701) 328–2295.
Ohio			Ohio received a one–time only authorization to collect data from homeschoolers in 1989–90. This accounted for 2,729 children. Abdinur S. Mohamud, (614) 466–2937.
Oklahoma			No data available. Ron R. Roblyer, (405) 521–3333.
Oregon	4,578	10,764	The SEA gathers reports from education service districts. Leon Fuhrman, (503) 378–5585, ext. 682.
Pennsylvania	2,152	15,457	The SEA gathers reports from the LEAs. John Creason, (717) 787–7289; Marion K. Gray, (717) 783–3750. The published data for 1996–97 indicated 17,861 documented children, a 15.5 percent increase.
Rhode Island			LEAs have sole responsibility. Sharon Osborn, (401) 277–2031, ext. 2003.
South Carolina	790	4,284	This is the total of reports from school districts or from state and local private homeschool associations. Parents have a choice of filing papers through either the district or through a homeschooling association. Note, the LEAs receive 25 percent of state per pupil support for reported home schoolers. For the 1997–98 school year, the state received papers for 5,595 children from districts and the homeschool associations (averaging 15.3 percent increase per year since 1995–96). Fred Grieb, (803) 734-8331; Mary Jo Ferriter (data office), (803) 734–8263.
South Dakota	1,458	2,724	Families file with the LEA which forwards a copy to the SEA. Dean Buchanan, (605) 773–3553.
Tennessee	1,248	2,513	The SEA believes an additional 1,400 children in 1990–91 and possibly as many as 20,000 in 1995–96 were homeschooling legally, through enrollment in a private school. Parents do not have to file papers with the state for these children. James Abernathy, (615) 532–4711.
Texas			No data available. Jim Davis, (512) 463–9354.

State	Reported number of homeschooling children		Notes on data, additional information on the state and name of SEA contact
	1990–91	1995–96	
Utah			LEAs have sole responsibility. The state relies on the homeschool association estimate. Douglas F. Bates, (801) 538-7832.
Vermont	680	1,526	Parents file a report with the SEA. Natalie Casce, (802) 828–5406.
Virginia	3,746	10,862	Reports from LEAs. The 1990–91 data are an average of data from September 1989 (2,934) and 1991 (4,558) and do not include homeschooled students who have obtained a religious exemption from the compulsory education law through the LEA. The 1995–96 data includes both regular filings (8,678) and religious exemptions (2,184). Charles W. Finley, (804) 225–2747.
Washington	7,046	18,074	Families file with the LEA, which reports to the SEA. Melinda Dyer, (206) 753–7389.
West Virginia			The last year for which data are available is 1989–90. The SEA reported that 399 families had filed papers with the LEA as of the spring of 1989. The SEA staff at the time multiplied this by an estimated number of compulsory school aged children per family and estimated that 684 children were homeschooling in the state. The SEA has no readily available data for 1995–96. David Perine, (304) 558–3788.
Wisconsin	6,298	15,632	Parents file reports with the SEA. The 1990–91 data are from February 1991. Sally Sarnstrom, (608) 266–7475.
Wyoming	535	1,544	Parents file reports with the SEA. For 1996, the state had papers accounting for 920 families, and 1,648 children. Jim Lendino, (307) 777–6268.
TOTAL	76,968	222,040	

*Table Notes

This table presents numbers of homeschooled children where state education agencies (SEAs) have published their documented data for 1990–91 and 1995–96. Data often include children only of compulsory school age. These data do not include children enrolled in a public school distance learning program or independent study. These data are not collected according to any uniform format among states, and time frames vary considerably. In some cases a different method is used in the same state for the two points in time. Most often the local education agency (LEA) collects the data, and forwards it to the state. When the LEA collects the data, the SEA often does not receive it until late in the year.

The SEA contact listed is the person believed to be most knowledgeable about homeschooling in the SEA. In most cases, this person is also the source of data, and was contacted by telephone, postal mail or e–mail. In other cases the source of data was a staff assistant or staff colleague, or a published report.

Appendix B
Families Who File Paperwork

State	1990	n	1995	n
Alabama	64.8%	54		*
Alaska	38.5%	13	50.0%	18
Arizona	60.0%	10	61.5%	13
Arkansas		*	92.3%	13
California	41.1%	319	55.1%	89
Colorado	28.6%	14	68.2%	22
Connecticut	60.0%	25	58.8%	17
Delaware			55.6%	18
Florida	46.4%	28	48.8%	41
Georgia	90.0%	10	87.5%	32
Hawaii		*	*	*
Idaho		*	5.6%	18
Illinois	34.5%	29	20.0%	35
Indiana	46.2%	26	30.0%	20
Iowa	51.6%	31	94.4%	18
Kansas	63.0%	27	69.0%	29
Kentucky		*	80.0%	30
Louisiana		*		*
Maine		*	100.0%	17
Maryland	68.4%	19	83.3%	36
Massachusetts	66.7%	12	84.6%	13
Michigan	36.8%	152	17.1%	35
Minnesota		*	80.6%	31
Mississippi		*	78.9%	19
Missouri		*	21.7%	23
Montana		*	82.6%	23
Nebraska	100.0%	13	81.5%	27
Nevada		*		*
New Hampshire	100.0%	13	85.7%	14

State	1990	n	1995	n
New Jersey		*	46.7%	15
New Mexico	100.0%	6	96.8%	31
New York	96.2%	79	88.7%	53
North Carolina		*	84.2%	19
North Dakota		*		*
Ohio	75.2%	105	81.0%	63
Oklahoma	14.3%	14	3.3%	30
Oregon	62.5%	16	68.4%	19
Pennsylvania	86.7%	45	86.4%	44
Rhode Island		*		*
South Carolina	69.0%	29	21.1%	19
South Dakota		*	83.3%	18
Tennessee	21.1%	19	31.3%	48
Texas	6.8%	132	8.4%	95
Utah			63.6%	22
Vermont		*	77.8%	18
Virginia	59.8%	82	68.1%	69
Washington	55.6%	18	74.6%	67
West Virginia		*	93.8%	32
Wisconsin		*	100.0%	41
Wyoming		*	91.9%	37

Source: Unpublished data from Brian Ray, National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), Salem, Oregon.

Table Notes:
"n" is the number of respondents in the Ray survey for each year.

* The percentage of filers for these states was deemed somewhat unreliable, as less than 12 families responded to the survey in these states in any one of the two years. An exception was made for two states where at least 12 families responded to the survey in a year and it corroborated the other year's results (the results were within 10 percent of each other).

Appendix C
Estimate of Homeschooling Children in 1995–96
Based on 12 states with Highest Filing Rates

State	SEA Data for 1995–96	filing rate from survey	Estimate of all homeschoolers	Total Population age 5 to 17
Arkansas	5,755	92.3%	6,235	477,000
Georgia	15,356	87.5%	17,550	1,372,000
Maine	3,400	100.0%	3,400	230,000
Maryland	9,529	83.3%	11,435	904,000
Minnesota	10,519	80.6%	13,044	925,000
Montana	3,159	82.6%	3,824	179,000
Nebraska	4,137	81.5%	5,077	329,000
New Hampshire	3,025	85.7%	3,529	219,000
North Carolina	13,801	84.2%	16,389	1,285,000
South Dakota	2,724	83.3%	3,269	154,000
Wisconsin	15,632	100.0%	15,632	1,009,000
Wyoming	1,544	91.9%	1,680	104,000
12–state totals	88,581		101,063	7,188,000
homeschoolers, percentage of 12-state population			1.41%	
National Population, 1995, age 5 to 17				49,149,000
Estimated number homeschooling nationally (1.41 % x nat'l population)				691,023

Source: Homeschooling data are from appendices A and B, and from unpublished data from Brian Ray, National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), Salem, Oregon. National data are from NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 16 (1996). The data were estimated by NCES for July of 1995. The newer 1997 Digest re-estimates the July 1995 data at 48,974,000. Use of this lower number would make the estimated homeschool percentages increase slightly (but less than .2 percent in the aggregate). But more importantly, the July date comes early in the year. Given national trends, this number would be expected to grow by the time of the data collection on homeschoolers for the 1995–96 school year. Therefore, the 1996 estimates were retained.